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for

August, 1942

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Vol. V

Record Supplement for August, 1942

No. 8

BACH (JOHANN SEBASTIAN)

BACH: Birthday Cantata ("Was mir behagt")—*Schafe können sicher weiden*. Katherine Harris (soprano), Alfred Mann and Anton Winkler (recorders), Edith Weiss-Mann (harpsichord), and Lucy Weiss (viola da gamba). 10" record (2 sides) No. MW-104; price \$1.05.

The exquisite aria "Sheep may safely graze" from the cantata Bach composed in honor of a patron's birthday is here sung without distinction by Katherine Harris. The feature of the occasion, however, is the use of recorders in place of the usual flutes. As in the *Fourth Brandenburg Concerto* reviewed below, these tootling reeds produce (from a possibly spoiled 1942 point of view) too little volume, and thus throw the balance of voice and instruments completely off. The record surface, too, is noisy. Put this down as a curiosity.

BACH: Concerto No. 1 for piano and orchestra, D minor (arr. Busoni). Alexander Borovsky (piano), with the Lamoureux Concerts Orchestra, conducted by Eugène Bigot. Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. D-LY6150/1; price \$2.64.

This recording of the beautiful *D minor Clavier Concerto* has many important virtues and a few important faults.

Its chief virtues are the sensitive playing of Borovsky and superior recording. Its chief faults are a certain thinness in the orchestra and a suspicion of dessicated academicism in the arrangement. Busoni is said to have aimed at making the solo part more pianistic than Bach had made it clavieristic. Comparing his "improvement" with the unimproved version played by Edwin Fischer (VM-252†), one cannot help feeling that what Busoni really did was insert his own angular personality where it was not needed. Some of Bigot's tempos have been denounced, but these things are a matter of personal feeling, as indications of any sort are extremely rare in Bach's manuscripts. In general, this is a highly satisfactory addition to the Bach section of a record library.

BACH: Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, F major. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Alois Melichar & Prelude, E minor. Alfred Sittard (organ). Three 12" imported records Nos. D-LY6082/4; price \$3.96.

The first of the *Brandenburg Concertos*, without being the best, seldom lacks those unexpected touches of baroque ebullience that have made the entire six worldwide favorites. Melichar does not make the mistake of puffing the essentially small work up to fit a huge modern symphony orchestra, but employs just enough of his men to give a

satisfactory tone in the hall and for the recording, which is adequate. The organ prelude on the sixth side is that published in Peters, Vol. 3, as No. 10. The organ is well recorded.

BACH: Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, G major. Marian Head (violin), Alfred Mann and Anton Winkler (recorders), Edith Weiss-Mann (harpsichord). String Ensemble from the Curtis Institute of Music, conducted by Ezra Rachlin & **TELEMANN: Bourrée for Harpsichord.** Edith Weiss-Mann (harpsichord). Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set MW-105; price complete with album \$4.00.

Recent interest in the ancient end-blown flute that is called variously recorder, *flute à bec*, beak flute, and English flute, has tempted serious musicians to play ensemble music in which, originally, it was used. In most modern performances and recordings, the wind instruments used in the *Fourth Brandenburg Concerto* have been standard modern flutes. These new recordings present "the original instrumentation for recorders and strings." They are not successful. Perhaps this is because modern ears have become too adjusted to the stronger voice of the flute. Whatever the cause, the result is that the recorders seem so weak as to unbalance the ensemble. This is especially noticeable at points in the score where the accompanying harpsichord or the solo violin drowns out the melodic lines of the recorders altogether. At such points, the piping sounds made by the recorders resemble nothing so much as a distant calliope irreverently overheard through a window during a concert. Possibly microphone placement or volume regulation in the studio could have altered this, bringing the volume of the recorders up to the needed level. As the records stand, however, they will be of continuing interest chiefly to enthusiasts for the instrument they celebrate. Unfortunately, too, the record surfaces are noisy.

BACH: Passacaglia and Fugue, C minor. Carl Weinrich on the organ of the Westminster Choir School, Princeton. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set MC-10; price complete with album \$2.62.

We relist one of the best of organ recordings. Using the baroque organ of the Westminster Choir School, Weinrich has given a masterly performance of the monumental work with which Stokowski has familiarized the world in transcription. Even those of us who prefer the sonorities of a symphony orchestra to those of the best organ have only to hear these records to realize that this is great music

properly performed. In the matter of interpretation (and all pretensions that it is possible to play Bach exactly as written down, without interpretation, are nonsense or worse), Weinrich shows himself more sensitive than the meteoric conductor. The architecture of Bach's intricate work is revealed in all clarity by the organ, which falls behind the orchestra only in variety of timbre and ability to produce staccato. While this set is still available, all Bach addicts and those who care for superb organ-playing should hear it.

BACH-FOX: Arioso ("Ich steh' mit einem Fuss im Grabe," from Church Cantata No. 156) & VIVALDI-MIDDELSCHULTE: Adagio (Third Movement of Concert Grosso in D minor, Opus 3, No. 11). Virgil Fox, on the organ in the chapel of Girard College, Philadelphia. 12" record No. V-118236; price \$1.05.

Playing his own arrangement of a familiar Bach aria and Wilhelm Middelschulte's arrangement of a scarcely less familiar Vivaldi movement, Virgil Fox demonstrates a pedantic and pedestrian way of playing the organ. His lethargic playing might be overlooked if his selections were less well known, but in the two he has recorded it is irritating. This record has little value of any sort. The recording is clear, but not full-bodied.

BEETHOVEN (LUDWIG VAN)

BEETHOVEN: "Leonore" Overture No. 3 & Ruins of Athens-Turkish March. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Ludwig. Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. D-LY6135/6; price \$2.64.

The *Third "Leonore" Overture* is in reality a large autonomous symphonic poem, and one of Beethoven's greatest compositions for orchestra. It is here competently conducted with instrumentalists of the best. The performance has been captured with astonishing fidelity, nothing being lost or smeared from the tiniest susurrah to the most explosive fortissimo. If the conducting were a trifle more resilient, this would be a candidate for the position of finest available recording. As it is, that honor most probably goes to the one made by Toscanini-NBC Symphony (G-DB5703/4, not issued domestically) and Bruno Walter-Vienna Philharmonic (VM-359). This version should, however, be heard before a final choice is made.

BEETHOVEN: Quartet No. 9, C major ("Rasoumovsky No. 3"), Opus 59, No. 3. Budapest Quartet. Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set CM-510†; price complete with album \$4.73.

Superlatives will alone do for the Budapest Quartet's playing of this masterpiece and for the work of Columbia's engineers in recording it. This set is one of the prime gramophonic events of 1942.

No less an authority than Walter Willson Cobbett, in his renowned *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, has pronounced the "Rasoumovsky No. 3" uneven. He prefers the first two movements to the last two, which he finds "inferior." But music-lovers everywhere have placed it high among the favored pieces of chamber music. The first movement (*allegro vivace*) is distilled of lively charm. The second (*andante con moto*) is a study in monotone, one of those developments that seem constantly on the verge of monotony, but never cross into it. The minuet and the final movement (*allegro molto*), in despite of Cobbett, are crowded with interest and good music-making.

It is possible that even one agreeing with Cobbett would be won to this quartet by the superlative playing of the Budapest Quartet. It is as though these four men solved every problem of ensemble so long ago that they no longer have to consider mere questions of tempo and rhythm. They are as properly together on each beat as though they were one man. It is to finer qualities of music-making that their attention is devoted — to shades of tone, slight swells and diminuendos, questions of balance and assertion. The result is something as miraculous in its way as Landowska at the harpsichord, the Boston Symphony strings, or Casals at the cello. The Budapest men supply — and here in music worthy of them — one of the great musical experiences of our time. As though in a choice seat in a perfect chamber-music hall, the listener to these records hears all they have to give. It is difficult to think of a way in which string-quartet playing could be better or better recorded.

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 2, D major, Opus 36. Belgian National Orchestra, conducted by Erich Kleiber. Four 12" imported records (8 sides) Nos. T-RE2485/8; price \$8.40.

Like the delicious *Eighth Symphony* reviewed in the July SUPPLEMENT, the *Second* belongs among that group of Beethoven's large works that has the least pretensions. It is delightful creating on a very high level, but it poses no cosmic problems, shakes no fists, and does not

keep its hat on before royalty. Kleiber has given it a spirited and aptly varied reading, and the Belgian National Orchestra seems excellent. The recording is up to the best Continental standards. Among the embarrassment of riches offered the prospective purchaser of the *Second* (Beecham-London Philharmonic CM-302†, Weingartner-London Symphony CM-377†, Koussevitzky-Boston Symphony VM-625†, etc.), this set merits serious consideration.

BEETHOVEN: Theme and Variations in F major, Opus 34 & Theme and Variations ("Eroica"), Opus 35. Claudio Arrau (piano). Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set VM-892†; price complete with album \$4.62.

Victor is exceedingly generous to lovers of fine pianism this month. In addition to adding E. Robert Schmitz to its list, it gives us the fine Chilean pianist Claudio Arrau in two compositions requiring the full use of his remarkable talents. Unless our records are faulty, the *Six Variations in F on an Original Theme, Opus 34*, has never been recorded before. It is a work of fascinating chiaroscuro and wide gamut, and is played with authority and great beauty by Sr. Arrau. His version of the better-known "Eroica" Variations must be compared with those by Lili Kraus (P-R20470/2) and Artur Schnabel (in *Beethoven Piano Sonata Society*, Vol. XV). It is impossible to make any but a highly personal choice among the three, but certainly Arrau's reading is as persuasive as any. In the matter of recording, he has received better treatment than Schnabel and as good as Kraus. Those who own a set of the "Eroica" Variations already will not wish to discard it, but would do well to have Arrau's set in addition, if only for the beauty of Opus 34. All others will find this new set a cherishable discovery. Great piano music and a great pianist are not often joined to such excellent recording as this.

BRAHMS (JOHANNES)

BRAHMS: Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Opus 56a. Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set CM-X225†; price complete with album \$2.63.

With an excellent version of this, one of Brahms' most consistently interesting long compositions, already in its catalogue, Columbia has seen fit to give us another. It happens that the slightly older set (CM-X125†) is not yet more than four years old. It is conducted with the apposite

warmth, dash, and glow by the late Felix Weingartner, one of the greatest modern conductors, played with tonal lavishness by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and excellently recorded. Furthermore, for those who might find Weingartner's conducting, in this single case, not sufficiently tense and glittering, there is Victor's Toscanini-N. Y. Philharmonic-Symphony recording (VM-355). Toscanini conducts the work as though both Brahms and Haydn had been Italians, which makes for liveliness, if not for authenticity.

No new recording was called for on the ground that existing recordings were so old as to be, gramophonically speaking, outdated. The only excuse for a new version would be that a superior reading and performance had been located. Neither Mitropoulos nor the Minneapolis Symphony has that to offer. Most curious of all, Columbia has not succeeded in giving them recording to match the all-round satisfactoriness achieved by its English counterpart in the Weingartner-London Symphony set. In a period when materials and machines for manufacturing records are daily more scarce, this set is inexplicable.

COUPERIN (FRANCOIS)

COUPERIN: *La Sultane Suite—Overture & Allegro* (orch. Milhaud). St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-118238; price \$1.05.

Vladimir Golschmann makes a most interesting reappearance in this flavorful eighteenth-century music, returning to the lists an orchestra from which record-buyers have not heard in many years. Couperin "*le grand*," so called to distinguish him from the numerous other members of a musical family almost as prolific as the Bachs, was the leading French composer of his time, and was greatly admired in Germany. His chamber music has a courtly air, in addition to true originality and high value, but was composed for combinations of instruments no longer in vogue. Darius Milhaud, like many French modernists in close sympathy with his country's musical past, has orchestrated movements from one of Couperin's chamber suites. The result is the availability and — one may hope — the currency of charming music we might not otherwise hear, the only legitimate excuse for altering a composer's original instrumentation. The St. Louis Orchestra has been recorded to advantage under Golschmann's flexible con-

ducting. This unusual record is recommended to everyone who enjoys what is good even if it is out of the ordinary, or because it is.

DEBUSSY (CLAUDE-ACHILLE)

DEBUSSY: *Clair de lune* (Suite Bergamasque, No. 3) & *La Cathédrale engloutie* (Préludes, Vol. I, No. 10). E. Robert Schmitz (piano). 12" record (2 sides) No. V-118240; price \$1.05.

Adding to its catalogue one of the pre-eminent pianists of our day, Victor has rightly presented him in his special field, twentieth-century music. Unfortunately, the twentieth-century music selected consists of two of the most familiar, not to say hackneyed, and most frequently recorded minor bits of Debussy. Mr. Schmitz is a pianist greatly admired by other pianists and musicians, a certain sign of his high worth. It is to be hoped that he will be allowed to give us some of his definitive and beautifully thought-out performances of less familiar music. Meanwhile, however, here he gives flawless performances, excellently put on wax. His interpretations of the two Debussy favorites challenge comparison with Gieseking's playing of them, than which no higher praise is possible. Hear him, by all means.

DOHNANYI (ERNST VON)

DOHNANYI: *Serenade for violin, viola, and cello, in C major, Opus 10*. Jascha Heifetz (violin), William Primrose (viola), and Emanuel Feuermann (cello). Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-903†; price complete with album \$3.67.

Continuing the interesting series of chamber works begun in April with the Rubinstein-Heifetz-Feuermann reading of Brahms' *Trio No. 1* (VM-883†), Victor now goes slightly off the beaten track to give use the first recording of Dohnányi's *Serenade for String Trio, Opus 10*. Considering that each of the performing artists involved is a star in his own right, and used to shining, the ensemble is remarkably smooth, though it cannot pretend to equal that of a trio or quartet of which the members have played together for years, submerging their private personalities in the group. Dohnányi is an old-fashioned eclectic of the type of Rachmaninoff, and his music has a distinctly nineteenth-century flavor. It is expertly made, full of clever uses of stereotyped musical gestures. In this *Serenade*, however,

as in most of his music, true individuality is lacking. The music is pleasant, that is, entertaining even, but wholly lacks incisiveness and profile. It is good to note that Victor plans to continue this enterprising series with works by Beethoven, Handel, Mendelssohn, and Mozart. We would welcome previously unrecorded works by living composers (not to mention the dead), but can hope that Victor will select something more enterprising than the uncreative echoes of Dohnányi. The recording is superlative.

DUBENSKY (ARCADY)

DUBENSKY: Stephen Foster (Theme, Variations, & Finale) & Fugue for Eighteen Violins. Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fabien Sevitzky, with L. Zawisza (violin). Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set VM-912†; price complete with album \$2.62.

Arcady Dubensky, a member of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, has built a symphonic composition out of *Swanee River*, *Oh! Susannah*, and *Beautiful Dreamer*. The work should be big stuff for movie-theater orchestras, unless — as seems possible — they are already overstocked with Stephen Foster glorifications. The simplicity of Foster's remarkable songs is one of their leading virtues, and this arrangement destroys it. The creative joining of melody to words is another virtue, and this arrangement destroys that too. The fourth side shows Mr. Dubensky in a better light, consisting as it does of a lively and interesting original fugue for eighteen violins. The Indianapolis Symphony, under Mr. Sevitzky's able direction, plays very well, and has been adequately recorded.

DVORAK (ANTONIN)

DVORAK: Humoresque, Opus 101, No. 7 & SCHUMANN: Träumerei (No. 8 of Kinderszenen, Opus 15). Nathan Milstein (violin) and Artur Balsam (piano). 10" record (2 sides). No. C-17337D; price 79c.

Nathan Milstein, playing competently, and accompanied well by Artur Balsam, has now given us arrangements (by whom is not stated) of two hackneyed recital encores. This sort of brief excerpt, particularly in transcription, has long since lost its original value, except perhaps for the lucky children who hear it for the first, rather than the million-and-first time. The recording is adequate.

ELGAR (SIR EDWARD)

ELGAR: Pomp and Circumstance Marches Nos. 1, 2, 3, & 4, Opus 39. Toronto Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Ernest Macmillan. Two 12" records, 4 sides) in Set VM-911; price complete with album \$2.62.

In 1890, Elgar was just beginning to be widely successful. It was in the era of his marriage and his first wide fame. Summoning out of the surrounding atmosphere the very essence of Britain's self-conscious glory as an empire, he composed six military marches. The first and best-known of these (in D major) has come to be a sort of unofficial imperial anthem known as *Land of Hope and Glory*. They are bombastic, cleverly orchestrated, and well articulated, but empty. In these records, four of them are played in full regalia, conducted with great brio, and blatantly recorded. They do not represent Elgar — or the Toronto men and Sir Ernest Macmillan — at his best, but they are stirring jingoistic stuff.

GERSHWIN (GEORGE)

GERSHWIN: Concerto in F for piano and orchestra. Oscar Levant (piano) and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, conducted by André Kostelanetz. Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set CM-512†; price complete with album \$4.73.

First performed on December 5, 1925, and since given more often than any concerto by any other American composer, Gershwin's serious yet irreverent, old-fashioned yet novel, *Concerto in F* has been recorded at least four times. The two earliest versions (CM-280 and D-57†) were both played by Roy Barge and Paul Whiteman's Concert Orchestra, and were superbly performed. The old Columbia set was, for its day, excellently recorded, and is still in a large sense the best of them all, despite the thinness of the recording from a 1942 point of view. Whiteman understood perfectly what Gershwin was doing, and Barge played the difficult piano part as a percussive Lisztian improvisation, though sticking to Gershwin's notes.

In 1940, the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler, recorded the *Concerto* (VM-690†), with Jesus Maria Sanromá giving a scintillant performance at the piano. This was the first complete recording of the score as Gershwin had composed and orchestrated it for the New York Symphony Society and Walter Damrosch. Brilliantly recorded, this version would have seemed to glut the Gershwin *Concerto* market.

Now, however, Columbia has mysteriously given us an entirely supernumerary version. Conducted with incredible lack of elan and grace by André Kostelanetz, handled without insight by the members of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, played ponderously and without sensitivity by Oscar Levant, and given tubby, muddy recording, CM-512† is an insult to a composition of very considerable charm. The orchestral introduction to the wistful second movement is played so slowly as to fall asleep. Then Oscar Levant wakes it with thumping that can only be called tragic — in both senses of the word. Nor can one listener escape the feeling that an "arranger," that *couturier* among musicians, has tampered with the notes. Literally, the result is a sad mess. Own a Whiteman-Bargy version, and if you want the complete score, add the Boston "Pops"-Sanromá to it.

GOUNOD-SARASATE: *Fantasia on Faust Waltz*.
See **RAVEL:** *Pièce en forme de habanera*.

HOWE: *Allegro inevitabile*. See **MASON:** *Quartet on Negro Themes*.

D'INDY (VINCENT)

D'INDY: *Symphony on a French Mountain Air*, for orchestra and piano, Opus 25. San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Monteux, with Maxim Shapiro (piano). Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-913†; price complete with album \$3.67.

One of the most accomplished and delightful works in the modern French symphonic repertoire has at last received an absolutely first-rate and up-to-the-minute recording that is worthy of it in every respect. Vincent d'Indy's formidable learning and austere personality may have marred, from the public's point of view, many of his most promising works. But the *Symphonie sur un chant montagnard français* is not so blemished. Without proclaiming itself great music (it is not), it is a work of multifarious interest. It has melodic invention galore, subtleties and surprises of instrumentation to keep interest vivid throughout, and entirely satisfactory form. As D'Indy was a pupil of Franck, that form is what is called "cyclical." That is, though it is in three movements (*assez lent*, *assez modéré*, *animé*), it is unified by the constant reappearance throughout of all or parts of one or more outstanding themes. In this work, D'Indy has used this device with more smoothness than achieved in the famous *Symphony in D minor* of his master.

This would be just one more set of records, nevertheless, but for the performance and recording. Pierre Monteux stands almost alone today for the masterly manner in which he conducts the large works of the French nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this D'Indy work he equals the magnificence of his rendition of *La Valse* (VM-820†). Nothing in the score escapes his notice, and he is in close rapport with the spirit of the music. The result is the modern symphony orchestra at its very best. And here Monteux is supported by a truly great orchestra and a pianist — Maxim Shapiro — who has understood that this is not a piano concerto, that his part must be within the ensemble and yet retain its identity. Nothing in any department of the performance was lost in being transferred to wax.

Perhaps we may now hope that Victor will give us more Monteux. No better way could be found of closing the gaps in the recorded repertoire of French orchestral music. We could suggest that among the selections not to be overlooked in such a program ought to be D'Indy's *Istar Variations* and *Second Symphony* and Debussy's *Gigues* and *Rondes des printemps*.

KERN (JEROME)

KERN: *Scenario for Orchestra on Themes from Show Boat*. Janssen Symphony of Los Angeles, conducted by Werner Janssen. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-906†; price complete with album \$3.67.

Werner Janssen, the noted exponent of Sibelius, and a former conductor of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, here makes his recording debut. Given the chance, he will prove a valuable addition to the list of recording conductors. Here, however, he gives us an all-out Hollywood version of Kern's own stringing together of the hit songs from *Show Boat*. Kern has "arranged" the superb popular melodies until they are pompous, pretentious, and grandiose. Artur Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra (CM-495†) gave the *Scenario* a more restrained, and therefore perhaps less appropriate, reading, equally well recorded. As *Show Boat* was composed in the era of popular music to be sung, any one of the excellent songs of which this orchestration is made up is heard to better advantage in a performance by a good popular singer.

KREISLER (FRITZ)

KREISLER: My Favorites—Caprice Viennois, Tambourin Chinois, Liebesfreud, Liebeslied, Schön Rosmarin, La Gitana. Fritz Kreisler (violin) and the Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles O'Connell. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-910†; price complete with album \$3.67.

The six pieces in this album belong among the most popular encore pieces for violin ever composed. They have all also been known throughout the world for decades in all manner of transcriptions. Now they are wonderfully recorded in newly orchestrated versions by the composer himself, who also—being one of the greatest, and probably the most famous, violinist alive—plays the solo part. Although some may feel that the bloom was long ago rubbed off from five out of six of the selections, the fact remains that they are unpretentious light music of real grace and melodic interest. The balance between orchestra and violin is right, the recording is clear and full-bodied. Of the performance, all that need be said is that Fritz Kreisler plays as well today, after the long period when his admirers wondered whether he would ever play again, as he did when he had no rivals in the concert hall. The terrible accident he suffered some time ago did his art no discoverable harm. With the one reservation that many will find these pieces overfamiliar, Kreisler's favorites among his own compositions can be recommended as likely to become the favorites of anyone, at least as he plays them in VM-910†.

MASON (DANIEL GREGORY)

MASON: Quartet on Negro Themes, G minor, Opus 19 & **HOWE:** Allegro inevitabile. Coolidge Quartet. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-891†; price complete with album \$3.67.

Daniel Gregory Mason is the most eminent living member of one of America's first musical families. His grandfather, Lowell Mason was a salient organist, composer, and conductor, and provided the well-known music of *Nearer, My God, to Thee*. His uncle, William Mason, was a renowned pianist and teacher, and a minor composer. His father, Henry Mason, was co-founder of the Mason & Hamlin Piano Company. He is himself the dean of conservative American composers, and is also known as writer, lecturer, and teacher. In 1918, at the age of forty-four, he composed the *Quartet on Negro Themes* now recorded.

The *Quartet* consists of three movements: *allegro comodo*, *larghetto tranquillo-allegro scherzoso*, and *allegro vivace*. The first is largely based on *You May Bury Me*

in the East, the second on *Deep River*, and the third on *O What Do You Say, Seekers; Shine, Shine, I'll Meet You in the Morning*, and *Oh, Holy Lord!* It is well-made music of some charm, but noticeably lacking in definition and dynamic force. To call it professorial is to describe, rather than condemn it. Far more interesting, though very brief, is the *Allegro inevitabile*, by Mary Howe, used to fill out the last record. This is calmly modern in harmony, and truly engaging in material. Mrs. Howe is an American composer from whom we should hear more often on records.

The Coolidge Quartet now consists of William Kroll and Jack Pepper (violins), Nicholas Moldavan (viola), and Victor Gottlieb (cello), Nikolai Berezowsky having left it. The Quartet performs creditably, though it is clearly no match for so superlative an ensemble as the Budapest Quartet. Altogether, this is attractive Americana, but hardly "the" American music for which critics hopefully scan the empty air.

MASSENET (JULES)

MASSENET: *Hérodiade*—Il est doux, il est bon, Act I & **PUCCINI:** *Tosca*—Vissi d'arte, Act II. Rose Bampton (soprano), with the Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-118237; price \$1.05.

A new record by Rose Bampton presents a difficult problem. She sings well, and has a voice far superior to most. Her sincerity and intelligence are beyond question. Yet there can be little doubt that a quality of thrill, of inevitable finality, of definite personality, that we connect with great art is missing from her work. Sometimes she seems simply too polite, too prim and restrained. At others she seems clearly to be doing the wrong sort of composition. Nothing specific can be called false or blameworthy in her projection of the familiar arias from *Hérodiade* and *Tosca*. The results, however, are inanimate, flat, and uninteresting. It may be that Miss Bampton lacks dramatic sense, though anyone who heard her in the Schönberg *Gurrelieder* is unlikely to think so. What she does not accomplish, at least in recent recordings, is the combination of good singing and character re-creation. She has been well recorded.

MOZART (WOLFGANG AMADEUS)

MOZART: *Don Giovanni*—Finch 'han del vino, Act I, & *Deh, vieni alla finestra*, Act II (both in German). Heinrich Schlusnus (baritone), with orchestra. 10" imported record No. D-DE7008; price 79c.

The flexible and subtly handled voice of Schlusnus has been deftly caught in this record. Free of the ponderousness with which some baritones move, he sings with the free motion of a good tenor. No word of commendation could be other than an insult to the two arias he sings. In short, unless you are bothered by the unfamiliar accenting necessitated by singing Italian arias in German, here is a Mozart "must." However brief (the two arias could have been engraved on one side of the disc, allowing a third to be placed on the other), these two selections from *Don Giovanni* are infinitely worth owning.

MUSSORGSKY (MODEST)

MUSSORGSKY: *Pictures at an Exhibition* (orch. Stokowski). All-American Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set CM-511†; price complete with album \$4.73.

Arranging, orchestrating, transposing, and generally tampering with the works of Modest Mussorgsky is an international vice first made popular by Rimsky-Korsakov. That eminent doctor of music felt it his sacred duty to the memory of his dead friend to prettify and polish each work, from *Boris Godunov* down, until it lost its roughness, its strength, what might be called its Mussorgsky-ness. What befell such a work as *A Night on Bald Mountain* cannot be described in pages intended for family perusal. The final result of this mania on the part of musicians for believing that they know better what Mussorgsky was doing than he did is that, in 1942, it is all but impossible to hear three consecutive measures of Mussorgsky's music as he composed it.

The *Pictures at an Exhibition* is a suite of piano pieces composed in 1874, when Mussorgsky was 35, and already the composer of *Boris*. Conceived as evocations of the moods and stories conveyed by the paintings of one of his friends, the pieces are of varying quality. The most trivial of them is excellent wit. The finest—the finale, called *The Great Gates of Kiev*—is authentically magnificent. The suite was superlatively played by Alexander Brailovsky and well recorded in Victor's VM-861†.

Rimsky-Korsakov never got round to tampering with *Pictures at an Exhibition*. They were obvious tinder for an orchestrator, however, and Maurice Ravel set them afire with his unparalleled sense of instrumental shimmer and sheen. The result, while far from Mussorgsky, is a new composition of interest and beauty, a fine orchestral show-piece. The Boston Symphony-Koussevitzky recording (VM-102†) takes his version at face value and makes it a con-

flagration. Not satisfied with Ravel's labors, Lucien Cailliet of the Philadelphia Orchestra re-orchestrated the helpless suite, and his co-workers, led by Eugene Ormandy, recorded that version (VM-442†). At last, the master arranger of them all, Stokowski himself, stepped in to present his own orchestration, using the Philadelphia Orchestra for questionable ends (VM-706†). Needless to say, both Philadelphia versions were opulently played.

Now Dr. Stokowski, with the All-American Orchestra, returns to the fray with another version of his own version of Cailliet's version of Ravel's version. It is conducted showily and without taste, played with poor attack and uncertain tonal results. Muzzily recorded, this is the least satisfactory of the four orchestrated sets. Let us hope that we have now had an end of maltreatments of the unoffending *Pictures*. As has been pointed out in earlier issues of the SUPPLEMENT, there might be a certain interest in hearing the orchestration made by Tushmalov, a contemporary of Mussorgsky. But until a finer pianist and greatly improved recording come along, those who love the music itself will be content with Brailovsky at the piano demonstrating what Mussorgsky composed and Koussevitzky on the Boston podium showing what the resulting composition brought to the mind of Maurice Ravel.

PUCCINI: *Tosca—Vissi d'arte*. See **MASSENET:** *Hérodiade—Il est doux*.

RAVEL (MAURICE)

RAVEL: *Pièce en forme de habanera & GOUNOD-SARASATE:* *Fantaisie* (on the *Faust* Waltz). Erica Morini (violin) and Max Lanner (piano). 10" record (2 sides) No. M-101011; price 79c.

Introducing the admirable art of Erica Morini to its catalogue (her earlier discs were largely made for European companies), Victor has wasted it on two trifles. The *Sarasate Fantaisie* makes pure trash out of the familiar *Waltz* from *Faust*. The Ravel selection is an arrangement, by whom is not stated. In 1907, the composer noted down this melody as a wordless song, or vocalise, and even in its original form it is a piece of bright fluff. Miss Morini lavishes all her customary care and fire on them, but can do little to make them more than piddling. Her accompanist is excellent, and the recording is good enough to make us wish for the swift appearance of more intrinsically valuable music by the same artists.

SCHUMANN: *Träumerei*. See **DVORAK:** *Humoresque*.

STRAUSS (JOHANN 2nd)

STRAUSS: Three Delightful Waltzes. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Clemens Krauss. Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set VM-907†; price complete with album \$3.67.

This nostalgic album is notable chiefly for Krauss' perfect performance of the lovely "Du und du" from *Die Fledermaus*. His sense of appropriate beat truly re-creates the spirit of the Vienna that existed because Strauss imagined it. This sort of performance explains why numbers of Strauss' great contemporaries, Brahms included, regarded his genius with envy. The rest of the set is made up of the witty *Morgenblätter* (Opus 279) and the less interesting *Liebeslieder* (Opus 114). The recording, obviously made several years ago, shows only slight signs of age. Altogether, this is a set to be recommended to admirers of the best in three-quarter time.

STRAUSS-BENATZKY: Casanova — Spanish Romance & Nuns' Chorus. Orchestra of the Grosses Schauspielhaus, Berlin, conducted by Ernest Hauke, with Anni Frind (soprano) and chorus. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. G-C2435; price \$2.10.

The operetta that Benatzky put together out of Strauss tunes and called *Casanova* was long as popular in Central Europe as *Blossom Time* has been in the United States. Here two of the hit songs are well performed by members of the cast of a particularly successful revival of some years back. This superior operetta music has been flawlessly recorded, and the result is most attractive. We have a small supply of this imported record on hand.

TCHAIKOVSKY (PIOTR ILYICH)

TCHAIKOVSKY: Capriccio Italien, Opus 45 & Eugene Onegin—Polonaise. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Alois Meichar. Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. D-LY6066/7; price \$2.64.

The *Capriccio Italien*, composed in 1880, is a minor and very popular member of the Tchaikovsky family of large orchestral compositions. Put together of sprightly, if rather banal, Italianate melodies, it is an orchestra showpiece of renown. On these imported records, it is played with the appropriate brilliance, and in excellent tempos. The recording is immaculate. The fourth side gives us the dashing *Polonaise* from that beautiful and unduly neglected opera, *Eugene Onegin*. Altogether, this is a generous portion for lovers of Tchaikovskyan melody — and who is not?

TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 6, B minor ("Pathétique"), Opus 74. Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, conducted by Willem Mengelberg. Five

12" imported records (10 sides) Nos. T-NSK2214/8; price \$13.10.

As Americans whose memory goes back to days when Mengelberg conducted in New York will recall, he has a particular affinity for Tchaikovsky, and conducts his works with full appreciation, not only of their obvious surface qualities, but also of their inner structure and tensions. His performance of the last of the renowned symphonies (when will someone record the *First Symphony* and the *Second Piano Concerto*?) stands beside the interpretations by Furtwängler-Berlin Philharmonic (VM-553†) and Koussevitzky-Boston Symphony (VM-85†) at the very head of the list. The Concertgebouw Orchestra has been flawlessly recorded. This set belongs among the great gramophonic achievements.

TELEMANN: Bourrée for Harpsichord. See BACH: Brandenburg Concerto No. 4.

VERDI (GIUSEPPE)

VERDI: Otello—Monologue ("Dio! Mi potevi scagliar"). Act III & Death Scene ("Nim mi tema"). Act IV. Lauritz Melchior (tenor), with Columbia Opera Orchestra, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. 12" record No. C-71389D; price \$1.05.

Two of the finest tenor solos from Verdi's towering masterpiece serve, together with the Wagner excerpts reviewed below, to introduce the Metropolitan's great Danish *Heldentenor* to the Columbia list. Let it be said at once that Mr. Melchior has still a voice scarcely to be matched among living tenors. At his best, when overwork or other less tangible causes do not reveal his age (he is 52), he has vocal powers that, for purity, beauty of tone, and volume, are from the golden age. He sings *Otello's Monologue* and *Death Scene* with understanding of their dramatic significance and with the requisite vigor. But his closed method of voice-production, that closed method that has become a requisite for Wagnerian singing, is not good in this great Italian music. Could he open up, could he uncover his voice and sing uninhibited, he would make the definitive recording of any tenor excerpt from *Otello*, an opera he has sung elsewhere, though not in New York. As it is, one of the chief rivals to the present recording is Melchior's earlier record of the same excerpts (G-D2037, in German), for nearly all the others are so old as to be unavailable, or so insensitive to late Verdian style as to be inconsequential. Mr. Melchior has been given excellent recording and well-balanced if somewhat insensitive orchestral accompaniment. With these reservations, his new recording, in Italian, of these two selections from one of the greatest of all operas is to be recommended.

VIVALDI-MIDDELSCHULTE: Adagio. See BACH-FOX: Arioso.

WAGNER (RICHARD)

WAGNER: Felix Weingartner Memorial (*Die Götterdämmerung*—Siegfried's Rhine Journey & Siegfried's Funeral Music). Paris Conservatory Orchestra, conducted by Felix Weingartner. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set C-X224†; price complete with album \$2.62.

In memorializing Weingartner, Columbia has issued in the United States the recordings he made a few years ago in Paris with the Conservatory Orchestra. The two most familiar orchestral excerpts from the final opera of the *Ring* are played majestically and well recorded, if not with as wide a range as could be desired. However, the comprehension and artistry inherent in Weingartner's conducting place these two records high on the list of the Wagner orchestral repertoire. Weingartner was a master conductor in many fields, and his death means the end of an era in Central European orchestral music.

WAGNER: Rienzi—Rienzi's Prayer ("Allmächt'ger Vater"), Act IV & Tristan und Isolde—O König, Act II. Lauritz Melchior (tenor), with Columbia Opera Orchestra, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. 12" record No. C-71388D; price \$1.05.

Duplicating selections he recorded some years ago (formerly available on V-7656 and V-11136), Lauritz Melchior has now recorded for Columbia *Rienzi's Prayer* and the excerpt from the second act of *Tristan und Isolde* beginning "O König, das kann ich dir nicht sagen," and continuing with "Wohin nun Tristan scheidet." He can do nothing, of course, to make the *Rienzi* passage less blatant and banal. But his voice is in such excellent condition, and is so well recorded—and his feeling for Wagnerian style is so incomparable—that this record is a prime addition to the recorded operatic repertoire. To have the greatest Tristan heard in the United States in this era sing one of the most delicate and poetic passages from the opera at the very height of his powers would alone be an event welcome enough to make the record highly desirable. Be it added, too, that Mr. Leinsdorf is here completely at home, and supplies impeccable support. Voice and orchestra are in perfect balance, and have been exquisitely recorded. Put this down as one of the outstanding vocal records of 1942.

WEBER (CARL MARIA VON)

WEBER: *Der Freischütz*—Overture. Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. 12" record No. C-11817D; price \$1.05.

Continuing, in the face of a serious shortage of shellac, its policy of issuing needless new recordings, Columbia now presents the much-recorded *Overture to Der Freischütz* in a well-played version by Dr. Rodzinski. In no conceivable way is this record superior to the one already on Columbia's list—C-68986D, played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. In fact, the edge in the matter of tone and clarity of recording is all with the older version, while Beecham's reading of the score brings out much more of its golden romanticism and dramatics than does either Rodzinski's or Arthur Fiedler's with the Boston "Pops" (VM-12040). It is unfair to the public, to unrecorded compositions (list on request), and to compositions crying out for modern re-recording—not to mention to the Clevelanders and Dr. Rodzinski—to present uncalled-for records of this type. It is good, but not, under existing circumstances, good enough.

WEBER: Ines de Castro, Opus 51—Scena ed aria (*Non paventar mia vita & Come tradir potrei*). Erna Berger (soprano) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Johannes Schüller. 12" imported record No. D-LY6181; price \$1.32.

In 1815, the year of his first great success—which followed the *première* of his victory cantata *Kampf und Sieg*—Weber composed this three-part scena for introduction into a play. Far from sounding Weberian, it would not surprise were it labeled Mozart or (early) Beethoven. It is light and winning music of suave melodic beauty. An introductory recitative is followed by the slow section beginning "*Non paventar mia vita*," and this in turn is succeeded by an allegro, "*Come tradir potrei*," the whole scena thus being in traditional aria form. Erna Berger, conceivably the greatest living soprano, sings it with incredible liquidity of tone and—as important—with comprehension of its shifting meaning. The recording is entirely worthy of her great art. In short, this record is treasure-trove for those who love the classic style and the often neglected art of singing.

BIRD SONGS

American Bird Songs. Recorded by the Albert R. Brand Bird Song Foundation, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University. Six 10" records (12 sides); price complete with album \$6.30.

These amazing records contain the characteristic calls of seventy-two North American birds, divided into six groups: the north woods, northern gardens and shade trees, southern woods and gardens, the fields and prairies, game birds, and western North America. Here are the mockingbird, the

lazuli bunting, the whippoorwill, and birds with such names as chuck-wills-widow and chachalaca.

The recordings were all made in the birds' native habitats. They are clear, and the individual songs are sufficiently long. Ornithologists, bird-lovers, and musicians will find this unique collection of songs a mine of fascination.

COLLECTIONS

The Evolution of Piano Music (1350-1700), Vol. I, selected by Curt Sachs. Sylvia Marlowe (harpsichord). Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set ES-2; price complete with album \$6.56.

In addition to fascinating anonymous pieces dating back to the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, this set contains selections by the following composers: Conrad Paumann, Francesco Bendusi, G. M. Trabacchi, E. N. Ammerbach, John Bull, Giles Farnaby, Peter Philips, J. C. de Chambonnières, Louis Couperin, Girolamo Frescobaldi, J. K. F. Fischer, and J. J. Froberger. The music itself is the thing, and the performance is mechanical. While brought together from a historical point of view, and perhaps of greatest interest to students, many of these pieces are of surpassing beauty in themselves. It is necessary to move the needle by hand between selections, as no run-in grooves have been made. The recording is a trifle thin, but otherwise satisfactory.

Latin-American Typical and Folk Songs, compiled and supervised by Irma Labastille. Carlos Spaventa (tenor, with guitar), Los Tres Huasos (male trio, with guitars), El Trio Incaico (male trio, with guitars), & Graziella Parraga (soprano, with guitar, etc.). Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set ES-3; price complete with album \$6.56.

Represented among the twenty-one songs in this collection are Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, and Peru. As Cuba, Brazil, and Mexico are known to have the most vital and interesting folk and typical music in Ibero-America, it can be seen that two of the richest sources were not tapped. And it is the Cuban music alone among what is recorded here that will have interest for music-lovers other than students and aficionados of one Latin American country or another. Students, however, will be happy to know that the music is presented authentically, by native musicians, and without extraneous arrangement. This set is a valuable addition to the slowly growing discography of Hispano-American music.

The Songs of Early America (1620-1830), compiled and directed by Elie Siegmeister. Helen Yorke (soprano), Rebekah Crawford (contralto), Earl Rogers (tenor), and Emile Renan (baritone). Three 12" records (6 sides) in Set ES-1; price complete with album \$4.99.

The three records in this set contain sixteen early American songs, ranging in type from Pilgrim Psalms to Election Songs, and from Sea Chanteys to Early Minstrel Songs. They are of immense documentary interest, though seldom of marked aesthetic value. The performance and recording are entirely adequate. Each record side contains more than one selection, and the songs are separated by narrow spaces without run-in grooves, necessitating the moving of the needle by hand. Schools, scholars, and amateurs interested in the musical history of the United States will find these records invaluable.

DICTION

Dewey at Manila (Episode 1 of History Speaks). Columbia Players. 10" record (2 sides) No. C-36619; price 52c.

Betsy Ross Showing the First Flag (Episode 2 of History Speaks). Columbia Players. 10" record (2 sides) No. C-36630; price 52c.

Perpetuating fictional versions of historic moments, these dramatizations are curiously old-fashioned. Were it necessary to manufacture interesting situations in order to make American history of interest to the young, they would be understandable. But the truth is that there is factual material far more dramatic than anything on these records. The musical interpolations are poor, the recording is good.

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory. Helen Hayes (narrator) with the Victor Concert Orchestra, conducted by Roy Shields. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set VM-909; price complete with album \$2.62.

After several hearings, this is a disappointing set of records. It consists of the words of three patriotic songs — *The Star-Spangled Banner*, *America*, and *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* — the *Salute to the Flag*, and Walt Whitman's *Beat! Beat! Drums!* The musical accompaniments are by Kurt Weill. Miss Hayes recites in a strained, forced, artificial manner that frequently approaches hysteria. Mr. Weill, using scraps of the melodies to which the three patriotic songs are sung, has made cinematic backgrounds for the voice, and has composed original backgrounds for the *Salute to the Flag* and the Whitman poem. His music, except as memory fills the scraps of traditional melody with power, is trashy and banal. No version of *The Star-Spangled Banner* or *America* can seem anything but weak as compared to a straightforward, well-sung projection of the songs themselves. Nor does Julia Ward Howe's magnificent poem need to be melodramatized or separated from the sufficing melody to which time has attached it.

Unquestionable sincerity, great care, appreciable talent, and really miraculous recording have here been misused. What one remembers when the set has been played is the unpleasant use to which Miss Hayes has put her voice. Only as a curiosity can these records be recommended at all.

H. M. GEORGE VI

A Message to the Empire (Christmas Day, 1941).

H. M. George VI. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. G-RC3272; price \$2.10.

This recording of the King's speech seems to have been made direct, rather than taken off the air as broadcast. It is excellent recording, without surface noise, and on a good reproducing machine gives the entire illusion that His Majesty is in the room. It is most interesting to note how, gradually overcoming a speech defect, the King has arrived at a point of injecting personality and warmth into his delivery. Not so important as the recordings of the Prime Minister's speeches, this is nevertheless a moving document of the Empire's war years.

POLISH ARMY CHOIR

Mother of God (A. Chybinski), 13th century & (a) **Polish National Anthem** (b) **Song of Warsaw** (traditional, arr. J. Kolaczowski). Polish Army Choir, conducted by J. Kolaczowski. 10" imported record (2 sides) No. G-BD953; price \$1.57.

An Eriskay Love Lilt (from Kennedy-Fraser's Songs of the Hebrides, arr. Robertson-Kolaczowski) & (a) **Polish Lancers Song** (traditional, arr. Orłowski) (b) **When I Left My Bonnie Lassie** (traditional, arr. Lachman). Polish Army Choir, conducted by J. Kolaczowski. 10" imported record (2 sides) No. G-BD968; price \$1.57.

Polish Mountaineer Songs: The Memory of Janicek (traditional, arr. Kolaczowski). Polish Army Choir, conducted by J. Kolaczowski. 10" imported record (2 sides) No. G-BD970; price \$1.57.

Rivalling the now-famous Choir of the Red Army, the Polish Army Choir here gives superb examples of concerted male singing. Only in *The Memory of Janicek* and *An Eriskay Love Lilt* does a soloist (Lieutenant M. Nowakowski) stand out from the ensemble. It is, perhaps, a trifle curious to hear the two traditional British melodies in Polish. The native melodies, however, are of real interest in themselves, and are handled magnificently by the soldiers. These records can be recommended without reservation to those who enjoy choral singing, for the recording is full, rounded,

and brilliant. We expect shortly to receive stock of further titles in this series. Meanwhile, as is now the case with all imported records, the supply is limited and uncertain.

TRADITIONAL

Song of the Volga Boatmen (arr. Koenemann) & **The Twelve Robbers**. General Platoff Don Cossack Chorus, conducted by Nicholas Kostrukoff, with N. Khadarick (baritone). 12" record (2 sides). No. V-118152; price \$1.05.

The recording of these folk songs is clear. One of them, unfortunately, has been overperformed to the point of nausea, and the other is uninteresting. Not recommended.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Progress of the War (War Broadcasts, Vol. 4, September to December, 1941). The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P. Nine imported 12" records (18 sides) in Set GM-370; price complete with album \$19.90. The speeches contained in this volume are:

JAPANESE TREACHERY IN THE PACIFIC — December 8, 1941

ADDRESS TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES (Broadcast from the Senate Chamber, Washington) — December 26, 1941

ADDRESS TO THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT (Broadcast from the House of Commons, Ottawa, December 30, 1941)

Continuing the inestimably valuable series of recordings of the Prime Minister's wartime speeches, this set is in some ways the most interesting of the four thus far issued. The choice of language, the dramatic delivery are the same. Two of the speeches, however, were delivered on American soil, and are recorded (well) as broadcast. In one of them — the Address to the Congress of the United States — Mr. Churchill's wonderful wit is displayed at its best. When most of the records made since 1939 have been forgotten, replaced by better recordings and better performances, these will remain unchallenged. They are the very stuff of the life, not merely of the British Empire, but of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. It is worth remarking again, also, that HMV in the midst of war still manufactures record surfaces that are lessons to American recording companies.

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THE MARINER. Model 57d. Acoustic, hand-wind. Size approximately 14" x 12" x 6"; weight 10¾ lbs. Open mesh, chrome-trimmed grill over tone chamber. Fine tone. Covering: Dupont Boston Alligator Simulated Leather in Coventry Tan. Price \$16.50.

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